

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 02918 261613Z
ACTION SS-25

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R 261426Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 2918

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS:PFOR, IS
SUBJECT:ISRAELI POSITIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 2873; (B) STATE 091888

SUMMARY: THE GOI WAS ANNOYED AT MUBARAK'S CLAIMS THAT EGYPTIAN AND U.S. POSITIONS WERE CLOSE TOGETHER ON THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. HENCE ALLON'S CABINET STATEMENT, WHICH WAS INTENDED AS A REASSURANCE. HOWEVER, EVRON ADMITS THAT THERE MAY BE AREAS WHERE DISAGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. ARE UNAVOIDABLE. HE ANTICIPATES AN ISRAELI DESIRE FOR A MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT CARTER AND THE NEW ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER AND, PERHAPS, A HIGH LEVEL MEETING PRIOR TO THAT. OVERALL, THERE IS A HEIGHTENED FEELING THAT ISRAEL MAY BE FACING A MOMENT OF TRUTH, A FEELING THAT HAS BEEN REFLECTED IN INCREASINGLY HAWKISH POSTURES. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER DISCUSSING ANOTHER SUBJECT IN A MEETING WITH EVRON APRIL 25, I ASKED WHAT SIGNIFICANCE SHOULD BE
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ATTACHED TO ALLON'S STATEMENT IN THE CABINET OF THE PREVIOUS DAY THAT THERE COULD BE POSSIBLE ISRAELI-U.S. DIFFERENCES OVER "QUESTIONS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE" (TEL AVIV 2873).

2. IN RESPONSE, EVRON SAID ALLON'S STATEMENT SHOULD BE SEEN AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE "VERY SATISFACTORY"

EXPLANATIONS WHICH THE ISRAELI EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED FROM UNDER SECRETARY HABIB AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON AS TO U.S. VIEWS OF EGYPTIAN VICE PRESIDENT MUBRAK'S PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS (STATE 091888). THE ISRAELIS HAD BEEN ANNOYED, EVRON EXPLAINED, THAT MUBARAK WAS SPREADING IT AROUND THAT THE EGYPTIAN AND U.S. POSITIONS WERE CLOSE TOGETHER ON THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. HOWEVER, THEY HAD BEEN SATISFIED WITH THE ASSURANCES FROM HABIB AND ATHERTON THAT THE U.S. POSITION HAD NOT CHANGED. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT ALLON HAD REFERRED IN THE CABINET TO THE FACT THAT "ACCREDITED AMERICAN FACTORS HAD RECENTLY DENIED REPORTS PUBLISHED BY ARAB LEADERS AND COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA CONCERNING OSTENSIBLE AMERICAN POSITIONS REGARDING A NUMBER OF BASIC QUESTIONS OF THE ARAB-ISRAEL CONFLICT, SUCH AS IN THE MATTER OF PEACE BORDERS AND THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE." IN THIS ELLIPTICAL MANNER ALLON HAD, IN FACT, MERELY REITERATED WHAT RABIN HAD SAID ON HIS RETURN FROM THE U.S., BUT THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD WANTED TO GET THE POINT ACROSS THAT ISRAEL IS NOT ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH THE U.S. SOME PEOPLE ARE WONDERING, EVRON WENT ON, WHETHER THE U.S. FULLY UNDERSTANDS THE ISRAELI POSITIONS ON THE THREE BASIC ISSUES - THE NATURE OF PEACE, BORDERS, AND THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE - AND HOW STRONGLY THESE ARE HELD. EVRON SAID HE WANTED TO RE-EMPHASIZE THAT THE GOI TOTALLY OBJECTED TO THE CONCEPT OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE AS WELL AS TO THE IDEA OF RETURNING TO THE 1967 BORDERS. THERE MAY NOT BE AGREEMENT IN ISRAEL AMONG THE VARIOUS POLITICAL SECRET

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PARTIES EXACTLY WHERE THE BORDERS SHOULD BE, HE SAID, BUT THERE IS NO DISAGREEMENT AMONG THEM WHERE THE BORDERS SHOULD NOT BE. ALMOST RESIGNEDLY HE ADDED THAT IF THE U.S. POSITION WAS DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF ISRAEL ON SUCH KEY ISSUES, THEN IT WOULD BE FAIR TO SAY THAT THERE WAS A DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN US.

3. AFTER THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED (THREE WEEKS AT A MINIMUM, TWO MONTHS AT A MAXIMUM IN HIS VIEW) EVRON SAID THAT HE EXPECTS THAT THE NEW PRIME MINISTER WOULD WANT TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. EVEN BEFORE SUCH A MEETING, HOWEVER, IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO HAVE A HIGH LEVEL MEETING (A PROBABLE REFERENCE TO THE REPORT WE HAVE HEARD THAT ALLON WANTS TO MEET THE SECRETARY IN EUROPE NEXT MONTH - TEL AVIV 2555).

4. COMMENT: EVRON'S COMMENTS ARE THE LATEST INDICATION OF THE FEREMENT WHICH IS GOING ON WITHIN THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT AS A RESULT OF THE REALIZATION THAT WE ARE

DETERMINED TO PRESS AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR A GENEVA MEETING THIS YEAR. STATEMENTS OUT OF WASHINGTON DURING THE VISIT OF ARAB LEADERS, SUCH AS THE CURRENT ONE OF KING HUSSEIN, ARE BEING SUBJECTED TO EVEN MORE INTENSE SCRUTINY THAN USUAL, PROBABLY BECAUSE, AS A CORRESPONDENT PUT IT IN YEDOT APRIL 25, "IN A VERY SHORT TIME, AND REGARDLESS OF THE ISRAELI TIMETABLE, THE U.S. MAY TAKE UP A VERY DANGEROUS MIDDLE EAST POSITION." THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION, INCLUDING A COMMENT BY PERES HIMSELF, TO REPORTS FROM WASHINGTON THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD CONCURRED WITH HUSSEIN'S PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF PEACE PROSPECTS THIS YEAR, A VIEW WHICH IS PROMINENTLY SHARED HERE.

5. THIS SEARCH FOR CLUES THAT OUR POLICY MIGHT BE DEVELOPING IN A DIRECTION UNFRIENDLY TO ISRAEL IS CONTINUING AT ALL LEVELS. IN RECENT DAYS WE HAVE COME
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ACROSS EVIDENCE OF WHAT COULD BE CONSIDERED A STIFFENING OF ISRAELI ATTITUDES, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. ONE EXAMPLE OF THE LATTER IS THE FIRMLY NEGATIVE RESPONSE WE RECEIVED TO OUR REQUEST ABOUT OVERFLIGHTS OF SAUDI ARABIA. ANOTHER IS THE FACT THAT AT A CURRENT MEETING OF INTELLIGENCE EXPERTS THE ISRAELI SIDE HAS TAKEN MORE HAWKISH POSITIONS THAN USUAL. ALSO, RECENT RAB MILITARY MANEUVERS HAVE RECEIVED UNUSUAL ATTENTION IN ISRAELI PRESS. PUBLICLY THIS STIFFENED ATTITUDE HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED IN THE PRESS AND IN STATEMENTS OF LEADING FIGURES, SUCH AS ALLON'S COMMENT TO NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR ABOUT THE FUTURE BORDERS OF ISRAEL: "IF MINOR CHANGES ARE SUFFICIENT TO GUARANTEE ITS SECURITY WE WILL AGREE TO THEM, BUT IF THE CHANGES ARE WITHOUT MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE WE WILL HAVE A SERIOUS ARGUMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES."

6. ALL OF THESE INDICATIONS ARE SYMPTOMATIC OF AN ACUTE SENSITIVITY AS ISRAELIS FEAR THEY MAY BE APPROACHING WHAT COULD BE A MOMENT OF TRUTH. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEY ARE NOT READY TO GO TO GENEVA IF THEIR TERMS ARE MET; IT DOES MEAN THAT THEY ARE BEGINNING TO FOCUS ON THE BASICS AND TO STAKE OUT THEIR POSITIONS IN UNMISTAKABLE TERMS.
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Message Attributes

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